

AD CLERUM – PRAYERS OF LOVE AND FAITH

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

You will know that the House of Bishops has commended the Prayers of Love and Faith for use in regular scheduled services of worship from Sunday December 17th 2023. The prayers can be found here - [Prayers of Love and Faith](#) We met with any who wanted to talk further about the Prayers on the evenings of December 13th and 14th and we committed that we would, in due course, follow up with an Ad Clerum about their use.

Firstly we want to acknowledge that many are finding, whatever their views on the Prayers, that the position that the Church of England has currently reached is not an easy or comfortable one and has strained relationships, for some very deeply.

Secondly, we want to make it clear that we will offer equal support to all clergy in our Diocese whatever decision they reach about the use, or non-use, of these prayers. The Archdeacons are also committed to supporting everyone. It is important to make it clear that no individual clergy person, or lay minister, is required to use the Prayers. Equally anyone who does want to do so may do so, so long as this has been agreed by the incumbent of the relevant Parish.

We hope that what follows will help all clergy, lay ministers and parishes. While these comments refer primarily to the prayers for a couple in a same sex partnership we would also remind you that there are prayers for a Covenanted Friendship and for the Blessing of a Home.

THOSE WILLING TO USE THE PRAYERS – Key points to note

The Prayers are commended by the House of Bishops. This means that it is the decision of the Incumbent / Priest-in-Charge whether or not they may be used in a particular parish. It will be important for those making decisions to consult with the PCC about this. The final decision lies with the priest.

The Parish Priest may then allow other clergy, and lay ministers, operating under their authority to use the Prayers. They may not require anyone to do so who does not wish to use them.

The Prayers may only be used in the context of the regular scheduled worship of the Parish, or College, School, Hospital or Prison Chapel. This would be within a Eucharist, Morning or Evening Prayer, or Service of the Word. They must not be the core focus of the service. They cannot be used to create a specific service for a couple.

The specific choice of which Prayers will be used may, of course, be undertaken in consultation with the couple who have requested that the Prayers be used with them.

Fuller guidance is to be found in the [Pastoral Guidance](#) Please read this carefully and if further advice is needed then please consult with your Archdeacon or either of us.

In all discussions and debates we encourage you to work within the [Pastoral Principles](#) to facilitate good conversation.

THOSE NOT WILLING TO USE THE PRAYERS - Key points to note

There is no requirement for consultation with the PCC if, as Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge, you are not willing to use the prayers. You may though decide that you wish to do so and it will help others in leadership with you to appreciate your reasoning.

If you are the incumbent and have colleagues, ordained or lay, who would be willing to use the prayers then you will need to talk this through with them. Some incumbents may be willing to allow colleagues to use the prayers even though they will not; some incumbents will decide that they should not be used by anyone within the parish. Both conclusions are valid.

If you are approached by a couple about having the prayers used in your church it is for you to decide whether you simply explain that you do not use them, or whether having done so you will inform them of neighbouring parishes where they might receive a different response. This signposting is not required but you might decide it is good pastoral practice. Since these are prayers for use in a regular service a couple can choose whichever church they wish for the prayers to be offered.

Fuller guidance is to be found in the [Pastoral Guidance](#) Please read this carefully and if further advice is needed then please consult with your Archdeacon or either of us.

In all discussions and debates we encourage you to work within the [Pastoral Principles](#) to facilitate good conversation.

PARISHES IN VACANCY

The legal position is clear that in this matter the Diocesan Bishop is 'the ordinary' so far as parishes in vacancy are concerned. In order to avoid any confusion at present parishes in vacancy should not use these prayers. This situation will be kept under review.

THE FUTURE

The House of Bishops is continuing work on LLF particularly:

- on whether the Prayers could be used within a standalone service though authorisation would need to be made within General Synod;

- what the expectations will be of clergy and those exploring ordination particularly whether same sex civil marriage would be allowed. Currently this is not permitted.
- what pastoral assurance might look like for those who do not agree with the decisions of General Synod and the House of Bishops in this matter.

While working hard at this it will take a while before the shape of final proposals emerge.

Archdeacons Bob, Rick and Libby together with ourselves are very happy to talk with you if you have any further questions about using these Prayers. If you are approached by the media we suggest that you seek advice from the Communications Team.

We are very grateful to you all for taking the time to read this, and we know that you will respond prayerfully and graciously, especially in how you relate to one another. Whatever our convictions we know that we all want to ensure that all people are welcomed in our church life.

Yours in Christ's fellowship

+Paul and +Sarah